

No media ownership changes without representation

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The "BiennialReview" of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. I say "biennial review" in quotations because, if the proposed changes to these rules are adopted, it will be impossible to ever undo those changes. After the countless expected mergers and acquisitions, we will not be able to put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

Furthermore, I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may be indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited.

The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have open, informed discussion with a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

Our nation's forefathers also fought and died for our independence from "taxation without representation." I believe the FCC, which is not an elected body, and is not accountable to the electorate, has no business making changes of such magnitude. That is a job for our elected representatives in Congress, and of the President of the United States.

In addition to the single and only official hearing on this matter, held in Richmond, VA, I strongly urge Congress and the FCC to hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. I think it is important for our government to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on our government to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process. We, the people, have not been heard.

Thank you,

Michael S. Walker